CLAIM SET MARKED UP IN ACCORDANCE
WITH DECEMBER 4, 2000 AMENDMENT

1. (Amended) A method of creating and processing over a computer network forms representing applications for admission to different institutions, comprising:

creating in response to a request from an applicant for an application to a first institution a first application form customized in accordance with the preferences of the first institution, the first application form including data fields for entering applicant information;

providing to the applicant over a computer network the first application form;

entering the applicant information in the data fields;

posting the first application form to a server;

storing the applicant information in a data storage;

creating in response to a request from the applicant for an application to a second institution a second application form customized in accordance with the preferences of the second institution, the second application form including data fields for entering applicant information;

automatically inserting into some of the data fields of the second application applicant information from the data storage;

providing to the applicant over a computer network the second application 20 form;

entering applicant information into the data fields for entering applicant data into which information was not inserted from the data storage or into which the data inserted from the data storage is to be changed; and

posting the second application form to the server, whereby customized applications to different institutions share data through common data storage.

13. (Amended) The method of claim 1 in which:

the fields for entering applicant information include labels [and in which] :

at least some of the fields in the second application use [different] labels

different from those in the corresponding fields in the first application; [, and in which storing]

the inserting of applicant information being performed automatically; and

storing the applicant information and inserting applicant information from the data storage is independent of the labels used in the application,

thereby allowing each institution to customize the appearance of its corresponding application, while still permitting information to be shared across applications.

19. (Amended) The method of claim [17] 18 in which the metadata includes validation rules for the data.

20. (Amended) The method of claim [17] 18 in which the metadata specifies the sharing between applications or the accessibility of the data.

21. (Amended) A system for creating and processing customized forms for , unrelated institutions using a common third party data storage over a computer network, the system including:

a server computer operated by the third party and in data communication over a data network with a client computer for requesting a form and for entering information onto the form;

first data storage in communication with the server computer and including form description information specifying the content and appearance of each customized form;

second data storage in communication with the server computer and including [in a] user information posted from the client computer; and

a forms engine program operating on the server computer for generating a form from the form description information in response to a request for the form transmitted from the client computer over the computer network, the form including fields for user information, the forms engine program populating the fields for user information with user information available from the second data storage, accepting

information entered on the form by the user, and storing the newly entered information in the second data storage for use on subsequent forms.

22. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which generating a form includes generating a form including branding information identifying the particular institution to which the form is directed.

23. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which the customized forms include labels for data entry fields and in which labels are different for the same user information on different ones of the customized forms.

24. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which the same user information is requested using different styled menus on different ones of the customized forms.

25. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which at least some of the user information is parsed into smaller elements before storage, the smaller elements individually retrievable for insertion into subsequent forms.

26. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which the information about the user is in the form of user attributes and in which user attributes have properties that specify information about the attribute.

27. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 further comprising means for transmitting in a format specified by the institution information from a completed form to the institution associated with the form.

28. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 further comprising means for verifying information in a form, the verification means including means for verifying information common to all forms and means for verifying information for a specific institution.

29. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which the forms engine generates a form comprising multiple pages and in which the content of at least one of the multiple pages depends upon previously supplied user information.

30. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which the first or second data storage comprises one or more XML files stored on a computer readable medium.

31. (Amended) The system of claim [20] 21 in which the first or second data storage comprises one or more relational database tables stored on a computer readable medium.

32. (Amended) A method of creating and processing forms associated with multiple [institutions,] form data recipients, comprising:

contacting a server over a computer network;

creating a form customized for one of the multiple [institutions] form data recipients from stored form description information;

inserting available user information from a user data storage into the form;

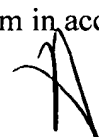transmitting the form with the available user information to a user for completion;

completing the form;

receiving the completed form; and

storing user information from the form in the user data storage.

33. (Amended) The method of claim [31] 32 in which completing the form includes completing multiple pages of the form with each page being transmitted to the server for verification in accordance with verification rules before completing a subsequent page.

34. (Amended) The method of claim [32] 33 in which receiving the completed form includes verifying the completed form in accordance with

verification rules specific to the one of the multiple form data recipients.

35. (Amended) The method of claim [31] 32 in which the user data storage includes a relational database.

36. (Amended) The method of claim [31] 32 in which the user data storage includes a one or 15 more XML files.

37. (Amended) The method of claim [31] 32 in which the user data storage includes information describing properties of the data.

38. (Amended) The method of claim [36] 37 in which the properties of the data include permissible values for the data.

39. (Amended) The method of claim [36] 37 in which the properties of the data specify the conditions under which the data is to be displayed.

41. (Amended) The [method] apparatus of claim [39] 40 in which the forms engine resides on a server maintained by a third party forms servicer and each form is customized for an associated are specified in a relational database.

42. (Amended) The [method] apparatus of claim [39] 40 in which the content and processes of the forms are specified in XML files.

43. (Amended) The [method] apparatus of claim [39] 40 in which the front end processing includes data validation.

44. (Amended) The [method] apparatus of claim [39] 40 in which the front-end processing includes creating a form including multiple pages, the content of each page dependent upon information previously supplied by the user.

46. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which completing fields of the application that were not populated from the data storage including overwriting with new values fields that were populated from the data storage, the new values being stored in the data storage in place of the existing values.

47. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which providing a data storage for storing information includes providing a data storage that is extensible without reprogramming the program for generating the customized application, thereby allowing an institution to readily request and store new information not previously stored.

48. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which generating a customized application includes generating an application that includes the logotype of the institution.

49. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which the data storage store metadata describing the data.

50. (Amended) The method of claim [48] 49 in which the metadata describes permissible values for the data and further comprising comparing the data in the completed fields with the permissible values.

51. (Amended) The method of claim [48] 49 in which the meta data describes conditions under which questions on the customized application are displayed .

52. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which the data storage includes a relational database.

53. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which the data storage includes one or more XML files.

54. (Amended) The method of claim [44] 45 in which the customized application includes multiple pages.

55. (Amended) The method of claim [53] 54 in which the content of one of the multiple page depends the fields completed by an applicant on a previous one of the multiple pages.

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